

# VEGAN STARTER KIT

Respecting Animals Means Going Vegan



What and Why?



Nutrition



Recipes



Life as a Vegan



INTERNATIONAL  
VEGAN  
ASSOCIATION

Get Started Today & Take The 1 Month Vegan Challenge



[GET STARTED NOW →](#)

**With Our 1 Month Vegan Diet Plan You Will Easily Succeed**



# VEGANISM: WHAT AND WHY?

## What Everyone Already Believes

Harming animals without good reason is wrong. Just about everyone feels this way. It's something most of us learned at an early age and it's something taught to children today. We all know that it would be wrong to kick a dog out of frustration, or to swat a bird's nest out of a tree just to watch what happens, or to throw a cat into a lake for fun.

The idea that it's wrong to unnecessarily harm animals is moral common sense. Because animals have lives of their own and experience pleasure and pain just like we do, it's immoral to cause them harm when we don't need to. It's so obvious that no one would question it.

The way we live our lives, however, often conflicts with this basic belief we all share. Sure, we avoid kicking dogs and swatting birds' nests out of trees. But there are many other ways we are causing terrible harm to animals every day. We cause tremendous suffering and death to animals for food, clothing, entertainment, and other purposes. And all of this harm is completely unnecessary and avoidable.

Fortunately, we have the option to stop harming animals unnecessarily. We can live up to our own moral standards. All we have to do is become **vegan**. It's really that simple.

This may seem like a surprising, sudden, or extreme conclusion. So let's slow down and have a closer look.

### Sentient beings

Beings who can experience pleasure and pain are often referred to as "sentient." A sentient being's life can go better or worse, since she has a subjective experience of the world.

Animals (including humans) are sentient, whereas most other lifeforms, such as plants, are not.



*V is for  
vegan*

A vegan is someone with a lived commitment to not use or consume animals or animal products for any purpose, including food (e.g., dairy, honey, meat, bone-char refined sugar, eggs, etc.), clothing (e.g., silk, leather, wool), and entertainment (e.g., animal racing, hunting).

# Veganism: Putting Our Beliefs Into Practice

We started out by highlighting something we all already believe: that it's wrong to harm animals without good reason. From there, we concluded that we should all be vegan. You might be skeptical of the jump.

## Harm

You might wonder just how much animals are truly harmed for things like food and clothing. In reality, the answer is clear and devastating. Using animals in the production of food and clothing involves forced confinement and emotional and psychological deprivation. It means tearing apart mothers and their children. It means suffocating countless billions of fishes and other aquatic creatures every year. And, of course, it involves the slaughtering of billions more land animals like chickens, turkeys, cows, and pigs. Meat, dairy, eggs, honey, leather, wool, silk, and all other animal products come from processes that involve enormous suffering, harm, and death.

What we do to animals for food and clothing is much worse than kicking dogs and throwing cats into lakes. And as long as we use animals for things like food, clothing, cosmetics, and entertainment, we will continue to cause them great harm and we will continue to kill them in staggering numbers.

## Necessity

The sad fact of the matter is that we are causing vast harm and death to animals. But you might ask whether what we are doing is truly *unnecessary*. Isn't that the difference between kicking dogs and eating animal products? Don't we need to use animals for things like food and clothing?

Here, too, the answer is simple: *No*.

Many people assume that humans can't live well on an exclusively plant-based diet. But this is just false. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics—the world's largest organization of nutrition professionals—states that, when appropriately planned, vegan diets are “healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits for the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes.”

On the clothing front, things are even simpler. There is an endless supply of fashionable and affordable plant-based and synthetic clothing. We have no need for animal-based clothing like leather jackets and boots, and silk ties, and wool sweaters, as there are many varieties of these items that do not use animals. The same is true of personal care products (e.g., soaps and shampoos), cosmetics, and other products that often rely on animals and their bodies. There is an entire industry of plant-based and synthetic products available to vegans.

Clearly, we do not need to keep intentionally using, harming, and killing animals. The only reason we have for continuing to do what we're doing is that we find it convenient and enjoyable. And it goes without saying that convenience and pleasure are not enough to justify the harming and killing of billions of animals. If we really believe that it is wrong to cause unnecessary harm to animals, then using and killing them for things like food, clothing, and entertainment is completely off-limits.

## Ethics and animals

This booklet is based on the work of Prof. Gary L. Francione. Francione's *Introduction to Animal Rights* contains an excellent primer on how animals are used and harmed for food, clothing, and entertainment, and *Eat Like You Care*, written with Anna Charlton, provides an in-depth look at the ethics of eating.



## Cats, Pigs, Dogs, Fish

In response, you might ask whether the animals we use for food and clothing are less important than more familiar animals like cats and dogs. After all, we live with cats and dogs, but most of us don't accept cows and turkeys into our homes. Maybe the animals we love are different from the ones we use and eat.

This line of thinking has no foundation. Pigs and fish are like dogs and cats in every morally significant way: they are thinking, feeling, aware beings who experience the world and feel pleasures and pains. The fact that many of us love and care for cats and dogs while we participate in the unnecessary use and killing of fish and pigs does not show that there is any important difference between these animals. Instead, it just proves that we are being inconsistent and failing to live up to our own values.

We can't claim to care about animals while we are harming and killing them without good reason. If we really care as much as we say we do, then we need to become vegan.

## Nature

Some people are hesitant to embrace veganism because they think veganism is unnatural. They ask: "Isn't the human body made to consume meat? Just like lions eat gazelles, isn't it natural for us to eat other animals? Isn't veganism unnatural?"

It might be "natural" to eat animals. But not everything natural is morally good. For example, in nature, animals of the same species often kill each other in territorial disputes. These fights and deaths are "natural." But this doesn't mean it is morally acceptable for humans to kill each other over land. The fact that something occurs in nature doesn't mean it is morally good for humans to do it.

Likewise, not everything unnatural is morally bad. For example, human innovations like modern medicine, bicycles, and computers are unnatural, but they aren't bad. In fact, most people would say that medicine, bicycles, and computers are very good even though they are unnatural.

In short, whether veganism is natural or unnatural is irrelevant. Humans are in a unique position to know right from wrong, and we all know it is wrong to cause unnecessary harm to animals. This is all we need to know in order to see that we have to become vegan.

## "Extreme" Veganism

Even after reading everything up to this point, you may still find veganism to be a rather extreme response to the moral problem we are discussing.

If veganism seems extreme, it's only because you don't yet know many vegans. Things we aren't used to often seem extreme. To people living in a hot climate, the idea of going to live in a cold climate may seem extreme. And to people living in a cold climate, the idea of going to live in a hot climate may seem extreme. Of course, there is nothing truly extreme about living in São Paulo or Montreal. But changing one's life can feel very dramatic, even when it isn't really a big deal in the long run.

Veganism is not radical or extreme—it's a simple and sensible response to the beliefs we already share.





# “Vegetarianism” and “Humane” Animal Use

Although becoming vegan isn’t difficult or complicated, it can seem like a big change before you’ve gotten started.

You might be hesitant to do something that feels like a big change. So you may be wondering whether you could make a smaller change to your life while still doing a morally good thing. For this reason, some people consider becoming a “vegetarian” or, along the same lines, continuing to eat animal products as long as they are produced “humanely.”

Are these morally good ideas?

## The Two Myths of “Humane” Animal Use

Some companies claim to produce “humane” meats, eggs, dairy, and other products, and claim to provide animals with a high standard of “welfare.” And some so-called “animal rights” groups endorse these companies and products. In light of all this, you might assume that “humane” products are morally good or at least a step in the right direction.

Despite what corporations and some advocacy groups would have you believe, “humane” animal consumption is just a myth. In fact, there are *two* myths of “humane” animal use.

First, it is a myth that animal agriculture can be reformed to make sure that animals are treated much better than they are currently treated. Over the last three decades, a senior law professor from the United States—Gary L. Francione—has provided substantial research showing that welfare regulation doesn’t and can’t work. In short, because animals are pieces of human property, welfare reforms will never meaningfully protect them.

Here is why: any attempt to improve how animals are treated must balance the interests of the animals against the financial interests of the businesses who own, sell, use, and kill those animals. But because animals are just pieces of property, even their most important interests—in not suffering, in living a happy life, in not being killed—will always be given very little weight in this balancing process. Attempting to balance the interests of a piece of property against the interests of the property’s owner is like trying to deal a fair hand of cards with a rigged deck: it just can’t be done. Because property owners



### More info

For more information on this topic, visit the IVA website ([internationalvegan.org](http://internationalvegan.org)) and read the position paper entitled *Why Does the IVA Not Engage in Reform Work?*



must be able to benefit from using their property, a welfare reform won't be put in place unless it allows animal owners to continue exploiting their animals in profitable ways.

This means that when new welfare legislation is passed, and when companies adopt new “humane” standards, it does little to help animals. At most, these reforms make only minor modifications to how animals suffer and are killed, while ignoring the fundamental moral problem in our relationship with animals. No matter what reforms we put in place, animals will still have their desires and needs ignored, still be manipulated against their wills, still be made to suffer unnecessarily, and still be killed for no good reason.

While doing little to improve the lives of animals, welfare reforms also make the public feel better about using and killing animals. As animals continue to suffer and be killed in greater numbers than ever before, businesses advertise their “humane” products and consumers eagerly buy them. Instead of helping animals, these campaigns further entrench animals as commodities to be bought, sold, used, and killed.

This is the reality of animal use. As long as animals are property, it is a myth that we will treat them much better.

But there is a second myth, too, and it is even more important. The second myth is a myth about morality. In short, it is a myth that there could be such a thing as “humanely” harming and killing an animal without a good reason. Just like there is no way to “humanely” injure a cat for fun or to “humanely” swat a bird’s nest from a tree out of curiosity, there is no way to “humanely” hurt and kill animals unnecessarily.

The idea of “humanely” harming and killing an animal without good reason is nonsensical. If it is immoral to harm animals unnecessarily, then we should never do it, no matter how nicely we claim to do it.

## Vegetarianism

The word “vegetarianism” is often used to refer to a diet that excludes meat but includes things like dairy, honey, and eggs. Many vegetarians also continue to use animal products like wool and silk.

Based on everything we have said so far, it is clear that vegetarianism misses the point, morally speaking. When we buy and consume things like dairy, eggs, wool, leather, or animal-based cosmetics, we are participating in a process that causes and depends on harm and killing. We owe animals much more than this. A vegetarian diet does not begin to address the moral problem in our relationship with animals. The only proper response to the problem is veganism.

# Changing the World and Doing What's Right

We treat other animals terribly and it needs to stop. Welfare reforms aren't the solution. "Humane" animal products aren't the solution. "Vegetarianism" is not the solution. As long as we are breeding, controlling, and harming animals without good reason, we are acting immorally and we are mistreating animals. If we want to make things better for animals, we have to completely stop using them.

## Making a Difference

In the face of how much harm we are causing, it is easy to feel powerless. Some people who are attracted to veganism are hesitant to change because they think there is no point. They worry that one person could never make a difference.

You can imagine someone saying: "What does it matter whether I eat a piece of cheese tonight? The cow has already been raised, confined, and harmed. Heck, she has probably already been killed. And billions more will be killed regardless of what I do. I can't make a difference, so why bother changing my life around?"

This feeling of powerlessness is understandable, but it is also misguided. What we do makes a tremendous difference.

What we buy and consume has a direct influence on what companies produce and sell. As more and more people decide to be vegan, we can have a profound impact on the number of animals who are raised, used, and killed. Over time, we can completely end institutionalized animal use. We have the power to change things, but only if we decide to become vegan. The collective force that will change the world is made up of individuals like you.

At the same time, if we all decide to continue using animals and animal products, then animals will continue to be subjected to unnecessary suffering and death. If individuals like you continue to use animals and animal products, things won't change. The power and the responsibility to change the world for animals is in your hands.

**“The power and the responsibility to change the world for animals is in your hands.”**

## Refusing to Participate in Wrongdoing

There may be some cases where a particular action might not make a difference. For example, it is possible that on occasion one could buy an animal product without directly causing any animals to suffer or die, simply because the purchase would not have any effect whatsoever on the economy or animal use. But this is no excuse for participating in animal use. Even in these cases, it would still be immoral and unjustifiable to buy or use the animal product. To see why, just consider an analogy.

Imagine that an innocent being is going to be publicly killed in your community. Whether you show up and participate in the killing will make no difference, because they will experience the same horrible suffering and death regardless of what you do. If you stay home, it won't make a difference. If you show up and join in the killing, it also won't make a difference.

### *More info*

For more information on this topic, visit the IVA website ([internationalvegan.org](http://internationalvegan.org)) and read the position paper entitled *Is It Always Wrong To Consume Animal Products?*



Even if it wouldn't make a difference, it would still be very wrong for you to participate in the killing. To do what's right, you have to refuse to participate in the immoral activity, even if your participation wouldn't change anything. We can't get off the moral hook just because other people are also doing the wrong thing.

The important point here isn't that eating a piece of cheese is as bad as participating in a group public killing. The point is that participating in something immoral is wrong even if your participation doesn't make a difference to the outcome.

In most cases, your actions as a vegan make an important difference. Being vegan reduces demand for animal products and directly assists in ending institutionalized animal use. But even in the cases where it wouldn't make such a difference, we still have to do what's right. We are obligated to be vegan and to take a principled stand against using, harming, and killing animals.

## Next Steps

We have discussed many issues in the last few pages. But the conclusion is short and sweet: we should all become vegan and commit to no longer using animals.

Thankfully, becoming vegan is simple, healthful, and rewarding. It's a change you can make today. Once you've made the commitment, you won't look back.

In the rest of this booklet, we will offer some hands-on, practical advice for becoming vegan. We'll talk about nutrition, meal planning, and some of the other practical aspects of making the change. Toward the end, we will offer a few words about where you might like to direct your energies once you have become vegan.

We realize that this booklet may leave you with dozens of unanswered questions: about morality, about the ins-and-outs of farming and slaughtering animals, about how the world will change over time (and whether it will change), about how to speak with your family and friends about veganism, about whether being vegan means being an "activist," and a whole lot more.

Each of your questions deserves a response, but we can't answer them all right here. If you have questions, we hope that you'll visit us at [internationalvegan.org](http://internationalvegan.org) and reach out to us at [info@internationalvegan.org](mailto:info@internationalvegan.org). Our team of volunteers is excited to answer your questions and help you in your transition.



© Milles Studio/Shutterstock



# NUTRITION

Let's get into the practical aspects of living and eating as a vegan. In the coming pages, we will offer an in-depth look at vegan nutrition, along with an abundance of healthful and flavorful recipes.

## Nutrition

### What is a vegan diet?

A vegan diet is one that consists only of plant-derived foods. Like non-vegans, vegans eat soups, stews, stir-fries, salads, and casseroles. They consume a wide variety of foods from around the globe, as well as plant-only versions of traditional favorites such as pizza, tacos, burritos, lasagna, burgers, barbecues, loaves, chilis, pancakes, sandwiches, and desserts.

### What is a healthful vegan diet?

As indicated earlier in this booklet, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics states that a well-planned vegan diet is healthful for all stages of life. They further advise that plant-based diets may provide a variety of preventative health benefits. Of course, as with any diet, a poorly planned vegan diet could be dangerous or unhealthful.

A balanced vegan diet is made up of these four food groups: 1) legumes, nuts, and seeds; 2) grains; 3) vegetables; and 4) fruits.



## Demystifying vegan nutrition

This section has been adapted from the IVA's *Demystifying Vegan Nutrition* document, which was developed in consultation with Dina Aronson, MS, RD. The original document, complete with footnotes and some expanded sections, is available at the IVA website ([internationalvegan.org](http://internationalvegan.org)).

*This information is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended as a substitute for advice from a healthcare professional. Persons with medical conditions or who are taking medications should discuss diet and lifestyle changes with their healthcare professional.*

Because individual nutrient needs and energy requirements vary due to age, activity level, and one's state of health, this guide should only be considered a broad blueprint for a balanced vegan diet. You should consult a dietitian familiar with vegan nutrition for a personalized set of recommendations.

### **LEGUMES, NUTS, AND SEEDS** (4+ servings per day)

The legume-nut-seed group includes beans, split peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, and soy products. These nutrient-dense foods are packed with protein, fiber, minerals, B vitamins, protective antioxidants, and essential fatty acids. Sample serving sizes from this group include: 1/2 cup of cooked beans, 4 ounces of tofu or tempeh, 1 cup of soy milk, 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, or 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butter.

### **GRAINS** (4-6+ servings per day)

Whole grains provide B vitamins, fiber, minerals, protein, and antioxidants. They are preferable to refined grains because the refining process removes the healthiest nutrients. Also, intact whole grains—such as brown rice, oats, wheat berries, millet, and quinoa—are nutritionally superior to whole grain flours and puffed or flaked whole grains. A serving is 1 slice of bread, 1/2 cup of cooked grain, or 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal. This group is fairly flexible with regard to servings per day. Vary your intake based on your individual energy needs.

### **VEGETABLES** (4+ servings per day)

Eating a wide variety of colorful vegetables every day will ensure that you're getting an assortment of protective nutrients in your diet. A vegetable serving is 1/2 cup cooked, 1 cup raw, or 1/2 cup of juice. For most vegetables, particularly calcium-rich leafy greens, it's nearly impossible to eat "too much."

### **FRUITS** (2+ servings per day)

Most fruits, especially citrus fruits and berries, are a great source of vitamin C. All fruits provide antioxidants. Choose whole fruits over fruit juices to get the most benefit, particularly from dietary fiber. A serving size is 1 medium piece, 1 cup sliced, 1/4 cup dried, or 1/2 cup of juice.

## **Important Nutrients**

Like non-vegans, vegans need to be mindful of consuming all the nutrients they need in order to be healthy. Four key nutrients that everyone needs to pay attention to are vitamin B12, vitamin D, omega-3 fatty acids, and iodine. After discussing these four nutrients, we will also look at calcium, iron, and protein.

## **B12**

Be advised that some B12 vitamins labeled as "vegetarian" are not suitable for vegans. In general, it is worth keeping in mind that many vitamins and supplements contain animal products.

**VITAMIN B12** is necessary for proper red blood cell formation, neurological function, and DNA synthesis. It is manufactured by certain types of bacteria found in nature. Because plants vary widely in their levels of this bacteria (and most of us favor our food scrubbed squeaky clean), we cannot rely on plant foods to meet our B12 needs. We can ensure our dietary needs are met by consuming supplements or fortified foods.

Our suggestion for teens and adults into their early sixties is to supplement with a vegan source of B12, either 100 micrograms (mcg) per day or 1000 mcg twice a week. Due to decreased absorption, people over 65 are advised to supplement with 500-1000 mcg daily, while we suggest toddlers get 10-20 mcg per day and pre-teens get about 20-40 mcg or so daily. If you prefer not to use supplements, consume multiple servings of a variety of vitamin B12-fortified food throughout the day.

## *Oils and spreads*

Concentrated fats, such as oils and oil-based spreads, do not fall under a food group. They are not required for optimal health, as essential fats are found naturally in whole foods like avocados, olives, nuts, and seeds, and for that reason there is no serving recommendation. However, a small amount of concentrated fats may be included in a healthful vegan diet. Choose oils and spreads that are minimally processed and limit your intake.



**VITAMIN D**, the “sunshine vitamin,” is also a hormone; our skin manufactures it from the ultraviolet rays of the sun. It plays an important role in bone health and supports normal neuromuscular and immune function. Good vitamin D status is linked to a lowered risk of osteoporosis, certain cancers, and other chronic diseases. Getting enough of it is not as easy as we may think. Vitamin D blood levels are an international public health concern.

The body’s ability to produce vitamin D from sun exposure varies based on skin pigmentation, sunscreen, clothing, time of year, latitude, air pollution, and other factors, and the vitamin is found naturally in only a handful of foods. This is why all people—not just vegans—need to be mindful about vitamin D.

The latest research suggests that even getting 100% of the current Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for vitamin D may be insufficient for many people. To ensure adequate vitamin D intake, take 1000-4000 International Units (IU) per day, depending upon your age and other individual needs.

## “All people—not just vegans—need to be mindful about vitamin D.”

Supplemental vitamin D can be found as either D2 or D3. D2 (ergocalciferol) is derived from non-animal sources, while D3 (cholecalciferol) is commonly derived from lanolin, a protective waxy substance secreted by sheep. More recently, plant-based D3 has come to market. If you can’t find vegan D3, D2 is just fine for supplementing daily.

To determine your vitamin D status, schedule a 25(OH)D (25-hydroxyvitamin D) blood test at your next medical checkup. Your healthcare provider can offer supplement guidelines based on the results.

**OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS.** A proper balance of essential fats is important for optimal brain function, heart health, and infant/child development. Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) is an omega-3 fatty acid that partly converts to DHA and EPA in the body. It is present in several plant foods, including flax products, hemp products, walnuts, and leafy green vegetables. Aim to consume 2 to 4 grams of ALA per day.

If you aren’t sure whether your intake is adequate, you may wish to take up to 300 milligrams of a vegan DHA or DHA-EPA blend per day.

**IODINE** is a trace element needed by the body to produce thyroid hormones. This makes iodine important to the metabolism and other vital bodily functions, including bone and brain development during pregnancy and infancy. Inadequate iodine intake causes insufficient thyroid hormone production, which can in turn cause a number of health problems, including an enlargement of the thyroid gland, called goiter, as well as issues with fetal and infant development and an autoimmune disease of the thyroid.

The few small studies that have examined the iodine status of vegans have found that they may be at greater risk for low iodine intake than the general population. That being said, iodine deficiency is a global public health concern, affecting an estimated 2 billion people, a third of whom are children.

Omega-3 fatty acids	
Food, serving size	ALA (grams)
Flax seed, whole, 2 tbsp	5.2
Flax seed, ground, 2 tbsp	3.8
Flax seed oil, 1 tsp	2.7
Walnuts, 1 oz (1/4 cup)	2.6
Hemp seed oil, 1 tsp	0.9
Tofu, firm, 1/2 cup	0.7
Canola oil, 1 tsp	0.5
Greens (mixed), 2 cups	0.2



*flax seed*  
is an excellent  
source of  
omega-3 fatty acids.



There is generally very little iodine in food. However, not much iodine is needed in one's diet, so the daily recommended amount is not difficult to get. The most potent food sources of iodine are sea vegetables, though the amount of iodine can vary widely depending on environmental conditions, species, season of harvest, and age of the plant. A serving of kelp or kombu can easily provide several times one's daily requirement, while a gram of dulse may contain 100% of the requirement. Apart from foods, iodized salt consumption is one of the most predictable ways to ensure one's daily iodine intake.

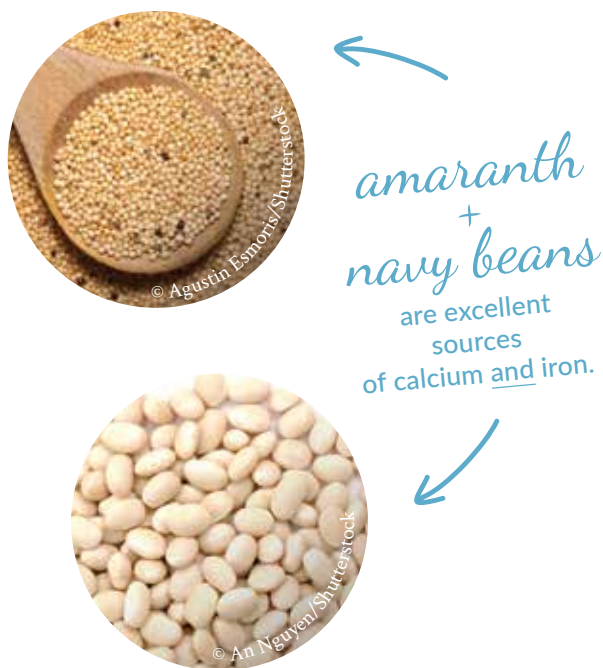
**CALCIUM** is naturally widespread in the plant kingdom, and so our calcium needs can be met with whole plant foods (and, optionally, calcium-fortified foods). Adults need about 1000 milligrams per day, though the amount depends on one's stage in the lifecycle. We recommend choosing several calcium-rich foods in each food group each day. Plants rich with calcium include leafy green vegetables, beans, sesame seeds, figs, and almonds.

**IRON** is a mineral used by the body to carry oxygen from our lungs to the rest of the body, among other functions. When one does not get enough iron, it can lead to fatigue, cognitive impairment, and other health problems. While the National Institutes of Health (in the United States) does not list vegans as one of the groups at risk for iron deficiency in its dietary supplement fact sheet on iron, many vegans may naturally fall into one of the groups that are at risk, including pregnant women, infants, and children. It's a good idea to be aware of maintaining an iron intake generally suited to your age and activity level.

Calcium	
Food, serving size	Calcium (mg)
Fortified orange juice, 1 cup	300-350
Amaranth, 1 cup (cooked)	275
Collard greens, 1 cup (cooked)	270-360
Broccoli rabe/rapini, 1/2 bunch (cooked)	260
Fortified soy milk, 1 cup	200-370
Sesame seeds (unhulled), 2 tbsp	175
Navy beans, 1 cup (cooked)	160
Bok choy, 1 cup (cooked)	160
Soy yogurt, 1 cup	150-350
Calcium-set tofu, 1/2 cup	140-420
Figs, 5 large (raw)	110
Blackstrap molasses, 1 tbsp	80-170
Almonds, 1 oz	70

RDAs for Iron		
Group	Age	Iron (mg/day)
Infants	0-6 months	0.27*
	7-12 months	11
Children	1-3 years	7
	4-8 years	10
Males	9-13 years	8
	14-18 years	11
	19 and up	8
Females	9-13 years	8
	14-18 years	15
	19-50 years	18
	51+ years	8
Pregnant Women	14-50 years	27
Lactating Women	14-18 years	10
	19-50 years	9

\*This value is an Adequate Intake (AI) value. AI is used when there is not enough information known to set an RDA.



Iron	
Food, serving size	Iron (mg)
Soybeans, mature, 1/2 cup (cooked)	4.4
White beans, 1/2 cup (cooked)	3.3
Lentils, 1/2 cup (cooked)	3.3
Spinach, 1/2 cup (cooked from fresh)	3.2
Amaranth, 1/2 cup (cooked)	2.6
Chickpeas, 1/2 cup (cooked)	2.4
Dark chocolate, 45%-59% cacao solids, 1 oz	2.3
Soybeans, green, 1/2 cup (cooked)	2.3
Pumpkin and squash seed kernels, 1 oz (roasted)	2.3
Navy beans, 1/2 cup (cooked)	2.2
Refried beans, canned, 1/2 cup	2.1
Kidney beans, 1/2 cup (cooked)	2.0
Cashew nuts, 1 oz (raw)	1.9
Black beans, 1/2 cup (cooked)	1.8
Blackstrap molasses, 1 tbsp	0.9

Iron intake can be improved by avoiding foods that inhibit iron absorption and through thoughtful food preparation. For example, iron absorption is inhibited when calcium supplements, coffee, and black and green tea are consumed along with foods containing iron. To increase iron absorption at meals, prepare high-iron foods like beans with foods high in vitamin C, such as citrus fruits, bell peppers, and leafy green vegetables. Cooking acidic foods (e.g., tomatoes) in a cast iron skillet can also improve the iron content of your meal.

**PROTEIN** contributes to healthy muscles and bones, tissue repair, a healthy immune system, and more. Because 10-20% of calories in most plant foods (legumes, vegetables, and grains especially) are from protein, and humans need only about 10-15% of their calories from protein, requirements are easily met with a diet consisting of a variety of whole plant foods.

The RDA for protein is dependent upon a person's age and sex. Pregnancy, activity level, and health status also affect your needs. However, to get a general sense of what your daily protein intake should be in grams, take your weight in pounds and multiply it by 0.36. For example, a 150-pound (68-kilogram) adult should consume about 55 grams of protein per day.

The following sample meal plan easily surpasses that target, at 77 grams of protein:

#### Breakfast

- 1 1/2 cups oatmeal topped with
- 1 oz walnuts
- 1 small banana

#### Lunch

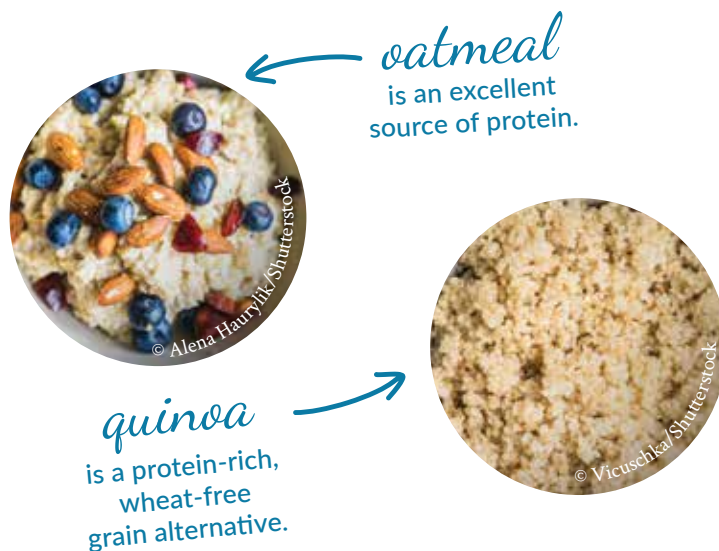
- 1 1/2 cups three-bean chili
- 1 piece jalapeño cornbread
- 2 cups southwestern vegetable salad

#### Dinner

- 2 cups stir-fried sweet potato, onion, bok choy, and broccoli
- 4 oz sesame orange baked tofu
- 2 cups brown rice

#### Snacks

- 2 tbsp peanut butter on whole grain crackers and fruit
- 2 oz trail mix



## Plant proteins

Despite a common myth, it is not necessary to “complement” plant proteins at mealtime. The human body stores amino acids, the building blocks of protein, so that complete proteins can be manufactured in the body over time.



## A Few Lingering Questions

### Don't I need some cholesterol?

Vegan diets are 100% cholesterol-free and this is 100% fine. There is no RDA for cholesterol because it is not an essential nutrient. The body (specifically the liver) manufactures all the cholesterol a person needs to be healthy.

### What about my food allergies?

There are numerous healthy grain alternatives for vegans with a wheat allergy or gluten intolerance. In fact, many grains are nutritionally superior to wheat, including millet. Quinoa, a seed, is also an excellent grain alternative. Products that were once only available in wheat varieties (e.g., bread and crackers) are now available wheat- and gluten-free.

A soy allergy is very workable, as soybeans are just one food. Soy-based meat analogs can be replaced with nut- or wheat-based varieties (such as seitan).

Nut allergies are usually isolated; few people are allergic to all nuts and seeds. Testing can determine which nuts and seeds are safe. Substitutions usually work well in recipes and in foods such as granola, trail mix, and nut/seed butters.

### Soy: too much of a good thing?

Many new vegans enjoy soy products that mimic the flavors and textures of meat and dairy products. Is it possible to consume too much soy? Yes, it is, just as it's possible to eat too much of many kinds of foods.

Eating too many processed soy products means that other foods are being displaced, which throws off a healthful balance of foods. A reasonable daily limit of processed soy products is two servings per day. Soy products are healthiest when they are fermented or otherwise minimally processed. Examples include edamame, miso, tempeh, tofu, and fortified soymilk made from whole organic soybeans.

### I tried a vegan diet and felt unhealthy. What did I do wrong?

Sometimes when we make positive changes to our diet—such as eliminating animal products or replacing processed junk food with whole plant foods—we may encounter some temporary bodily complaints, including cravings, fatigue, or digestive discomfort. These are not uncommon during a major dietary transition, especially if fiber intake increases dramatically in a short period of time. If symptoms continue for more than two to three days, you may want to see a doctor to rule out coincidental health conditions.

Sometimes a well-intentioned change to eating vegan can backfire when the diet is not properly balanced. One common mistake when transitioning to a vegan diet is eating too few calories. Healthful vegan diets tend to be big on volume—your plate should be overflowing with fresh food, especially when you include lots of raw vegetables. If you continue eating only the same volume of food as before, you might not get enough calories, leaving you tired, hungry, and irritable.

**“Healthful vegan diets tend to be big on volume.”**

Another common mistake is simply replacing meat with meat analogs, dairy products with soy-based alternatives, and regular sweets with vegan sweets. Going heavy on these items and light on the vegetables, fruits, and whole grains is not a healthful approach. To learn how to best reap the benefits of a healthful vegan diet, sign up for a vegan nutrition or cooking class, or pick up a reliable book on vegan nutrition, such as *Becoming Vegan*, by Brenda Davis and Vesanto Melina.



# RECIPES

The following pages contain some simple recipes to show you how easy, wholesome, and delicious plant-only eating can be. You can halve them if you're prepping for one or double them if you're cooking for a crowd (or seeking leftovers).

WF - Wheat-free  
SF - Soy-free  
NF - Nut-free

There are countless more vegan recipes available in books, magazines, and on the web.

## Breakfast

You could always opt for cold cereal, if that's your thing. Just read the label to avoid any animal-derived ingredients, then pour on any of a number of dairy alternatives: almond milk, soy milk, rice milk, and many more. If at first you don't like one alternative, try another. Not only do products within a category vary in taste, sweetness, and quality, but milks from different plants also taste nothing alike. If you're interested in more variety at breakfast, read on.

### YOGURT WITH BLUEBERRIES AND WALNUTS

(Serves 2) WF, SF

This is one you can prep before bed and enjoy as a quick meal in the morning. Just cover in the fridge overnight. In the morning, rinse the berries and add to the bowl with the nuts.

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup cashews (soak 1-2 hours for smoother yogurt, if desired)
- 2 large ripe bananas
- 2-3 tbsp lemon juice (1 lemon)
- 1 pinch salt
- 1/2 cup water, as needed for blending
- 1 cup washed fresh blueberries
- A few chopped walnuts

Adapted from the *Raw on \$10 a Day* blog.



#### Directions

1. In a blender, puree the bananas, water, cashews, salt, and lemon juice until smooth.
2. Pour evenly into two bowls or containers, cover, and refrigerate overnight.
3. Top each bowl with half the blueberries and walnuts, then serve.

## ALMOND MAPLE APPLE BOWL

(Serves 2) WF, SF

This is a fairly sweet meal, but it's satisfying and wholesome, too. As you eat it, you'll be glad that you took the time to make breakfast. If your mornings are hurried, you can leave this one covered in the fridge overnight.



Adapted from  
the *Raw on \$10  
a Day* blog.

### Ingredients

- 1 medium-large apple (select for preferred tartness)
- 2 tbsp walnuts
- 2 tbsp almonds
- 1 tbsp pecans
- 1/3 cup unsweetened almond butter
- 1/3 cup maple syrup

### Directions

1. Chop apple and place the chunks into bowls.
2. Chop nuts and add to the apple chunks.
3. Mix the almond butter together with the maple syrup in another small bowl.
4. Add the mixture to the apple and nuts.



*mixed nuts*  
pack in the protein  
to keep you satisfied  
through the morning.

## OATMEAL

(2 servings) WF, SF, NF

A classic morning meal, oatmeal can be prepared in a variety of ways. You can modify this recipe based on your mood and what's on hand. Flax seeds add high-antioxidant lignans, essential omega-3 fatty acids, and fiber.

### Ingredients

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 2 cups water
- 2 tbsp milled flax seeds
- 2 tbsp dried, unsweetened or fruit-sweetened cranberries
- 2 tsp maple syrup (optional)

### Directions

1. In a small saucepan, bring the water to a boil over medium heat.
2. Add oats to water.
3. Cook uncovered for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Remove from heat and stir in flax seeds.
5. Portion out into bowls and top with the dried cranberries.
6. Drizzle with maple syrup and serve.



*you can*  
add nuts or replace the  
dried cranberries with  
fresh fruit, such as a blueberries,  
strawberries, or sliced banana.  
Cinnamon is another  
popular addition.

These breakfast recipes don't even begin to scratch the surface of all the options available to you on a plant-only diet. As you build up your own repertoire, you'll find a wide variety of recipes for vegan muffins, smoothies, pancakes, and even crepes.



## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

